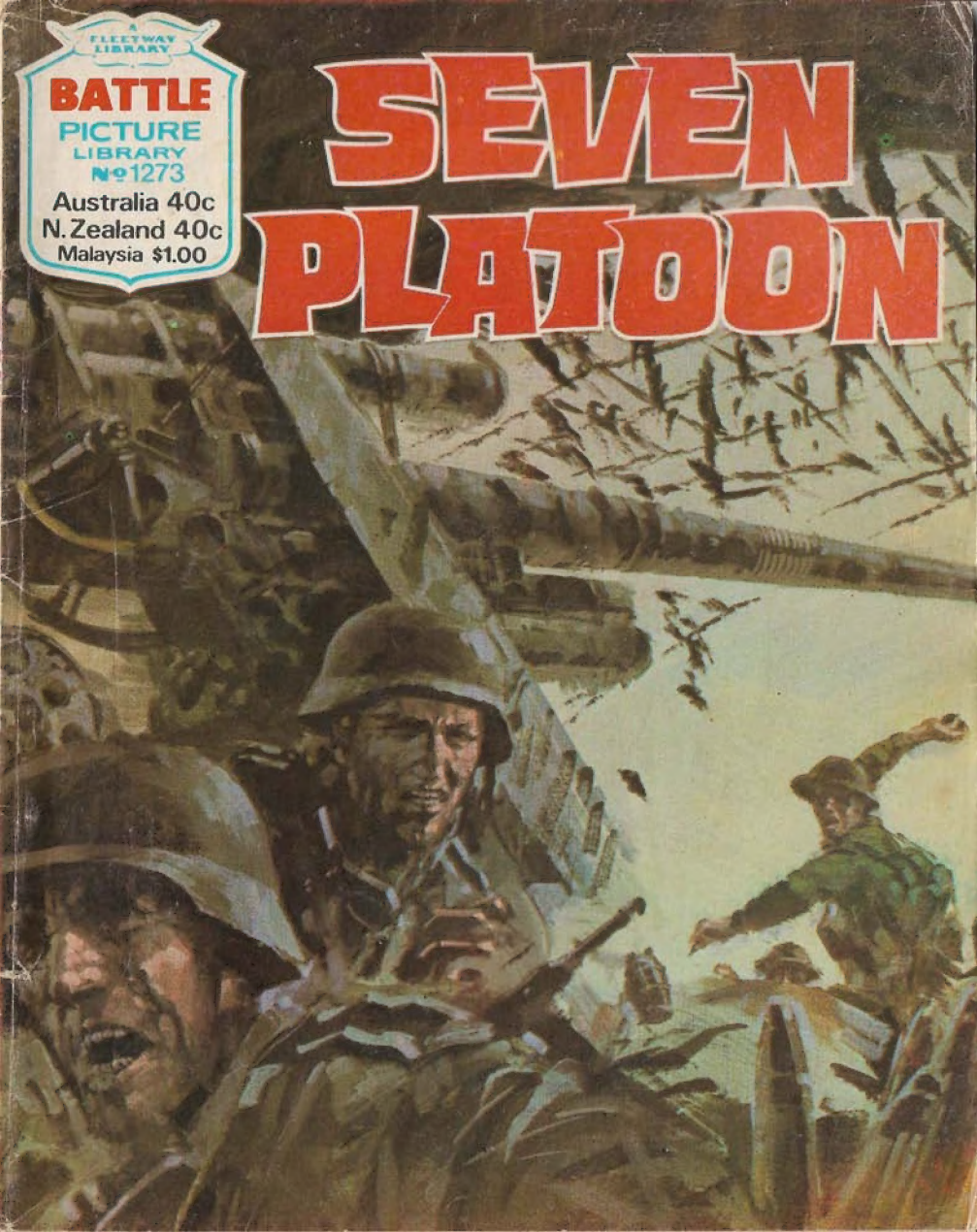


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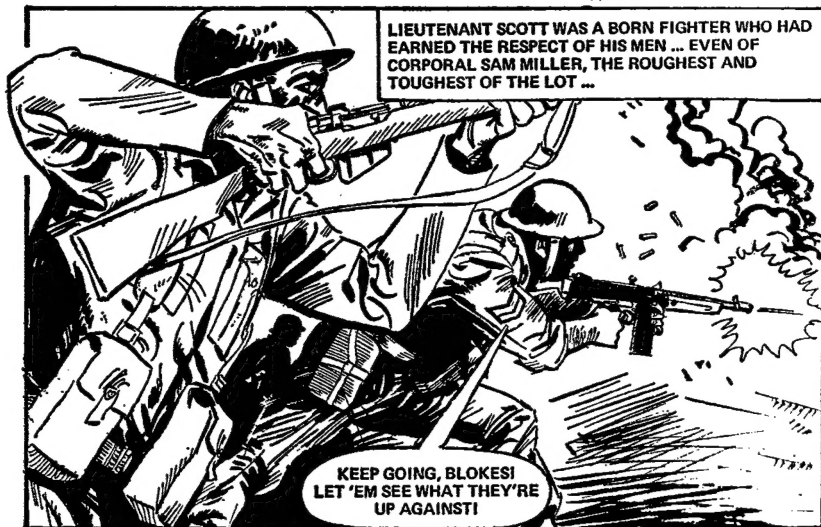
SEVEN PLATOON

THEY HAD A REPUTATION AS THE ROUGHEST
AND TOUGHEST UNIT IN THE COMPANY.
THEY HAD EARNED IT THE HARD WAY AND
IT WAS KEPT ALIVE BY THOSE WHO
SURVIVED THE HARD-FOUGHT BATTLES
AGAINST A STRONG AND POWERFUL ENEMY...



Chapter I.

RING OF STEEL



FARTHER ALONG THE SLOPE EIGHT PLATOON, BOGGED DOWN UNDER THE MERCILESS ENEMY FIRE, WATCHED SEVEN PLATOON CHARGE FORWARD...

LOOK AT THAT LOT!

THAT'S SEVEN FOR YOU, MATE! IT'LL TAKE MORE THAN A FEW JERRIES TO STOP THEM!

IF THEY CAN DO IT SO CAN WE! COME ON!



AS SO OFTEN BEFORE IT WAS SEVEN PLATOON WHICH SET THE PACE AND DREW OTHERS ON TO FOLLOW THEIR EXAMPLE...

AAAGHI



LIKE OTHERS BEFORE IT, THE RIDGE WAS TAKEN AND IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED SEVEN PLATOON WAS WITHDRAWN AND HELD FOR A FEW DAYS IN RESERVE...

HEY, CORP, HOW MUCH LONGER DO WE HAVE TO SIT HERE KICKING UP OUR HEELS?

SEARCH ME, LEN. BUT IF I KNOW SCOTTIE, IT WON'T BE MUCH LONGER!

LIKE THE CORPORAL, LEN TOPHAM AND GINGER DAWSON WERE GETTING BORED WITH THE INACTIVITY, ALTHOUGH THEY HAD BEEN OUT OF ACTION FOR ONLY TWO DAYS...

I HEAR JERRY'S GOT A BATTERY OF NEBELWERFERS FARTHER UP THE LINE.

TOO RIGHT, THEY HAVE. PLAYING THE DEVIL WITH OUR BLOKES, THEY ARE, TOO...

LIEUTENANT SCOTT DROPPED DOWN BESIDE THE THREE MEN...



THE LIEUTENANT WENT ON TO OUTLINE HIS PLAN...

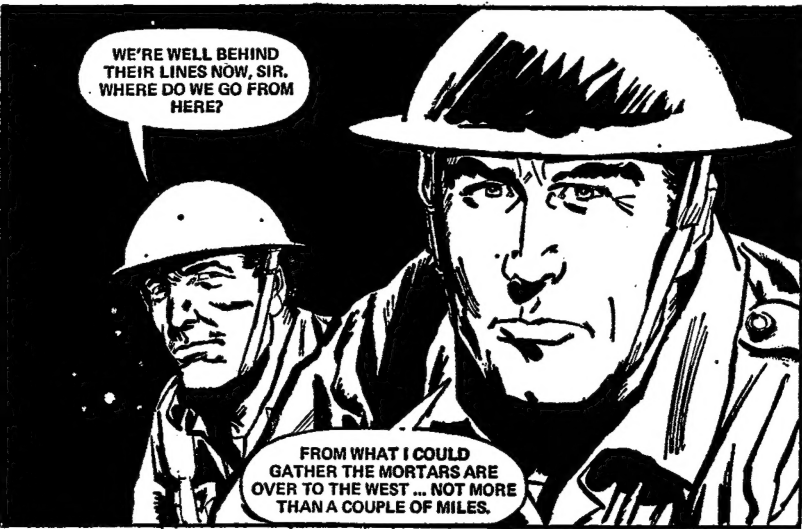




WITH THEIR USUAL SELF-CONFIDENCE, SCOTT'S MEN
CROSSED NO MAN'S LAND AND MOVED IN
THROUGH THE ENEMY'S OUTPOSTS...



WE'RE WELL BEHIND
THEIR LINES NOW, SIR.
WHERE DO WE GO FROM
HERE?



FROM WHAT I COULD
GATHER THE MORTARS ARE
OVER TO THE WEST ... NOT MORE
THAN A COUPLE OF MILES.



LIEUTENANT SCOTT LED THEM ON, THEN
SUDDENLY WAVED THEM TO COVER...

LOOK OUT!
JERRIES!

THE GERMAN SQUAD MARCHED ON
WITHOUT SEEING THEM...

I WOULDN'T MIND BETTING
THEY'RE A RELIEF PARTY. WAIT
HERE, SERGEANT! I'LL FIND OUT
WHERE THEY'RE GOING.

HALF-AN-HOUR LATER HE RETURNED...



SILENT AS GHOSTS THE BRITISH
MOVED INTO POSITION ...

RIGHT!
LET'S GET
WEAVING!

BURSTING SUDDENLY FROM THE SHADOWS
THE MEN OF SEVEN PLATOON BORE DOWN
ON THE UNSUSPECTING ENEMY...

AAAGHI

TAKEN COMPLETELY BY SURPRISE THE
GERMAN MORTAR CREWS FELL BACK....

CHUCK A GRENADE
IN THE WORKS, GINGER!
THAT SHOULD DO
THE TRICK!



ONE AFTER ANOTHER THE
MURDEROUS WEAPONS WERE
PUT OUT OF ACTION, BUT THE
GERMANS WERE QUICK TO
RECOVER...

MESSAGE FROM
HAUPTMANN KREUZNER, HERR
LEUTNANT! THE BRITISH HAVE
INFILTRATED OUR LINES. WE
ARE TO MOVE IMMEDIATELY!



WITHIN MINUTES A TRUCK
PACKED WITH WEHRMACHT
INFANTRY WAS RACING
TOWARD THE MORTAR BATTERY...





THE LAST OF THE MORTARS LAY WRECKED BUT THE NET WAS CLOSING FAST...



THIS WAS NO TIME FOR FINESSE. SEVEN PLATOON
CHARGED STRAIGHT AT THE ENEMY REINFORCEMENTS...



THE TWO GROUPS MET
WITH RIFLE BUTTS, FISTS,
BAYONETS...



BUT SECONDS LATER IT SEEMED THE YOUNG SOLDIER WAS RIGHT, WITH THE ENEMY ALL AROUND THEM, SEVEN PLATOON WERE IN DESPERATE TROUBLE. THEN DISASTER STRUCK...

AAGHI

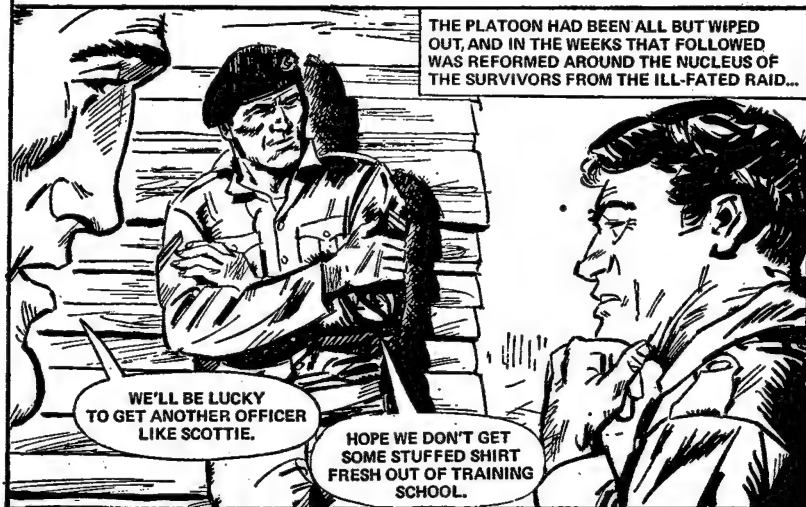
THE LIEUTENANT'S BOUGHT IT!

THE SERGEANT WAS NEXT TO GO, CUT DOWN BY A WITHERING BURST OF SCHMEISSER FIRE..

DAMN YOU JERRY!



Chapter 2.

RECCE PATROL

WE LOST A LOT OF
GOOD MATES ON OUR LAST
BRUSH WITH THE JERRIES.
SURE, WE KNOCKED OUT JERRY'S
MORTARS BUT IT COST US DEAR.
WE WON'T BE HAPPY UNTIL
WE'VE PAID JERRY BACK!



I GUESS WE CAN
UNDERSTAND THAT,
CORP.

I HOPE SO, SON.
SEVEN PLATOON'S GOT
A REPUTATION TO
LIVE UP TO...



TWO DAYS LATER, GINGER DAWSON
HURRIED OVER FROM THE HEADQUARTERS
BUILDING...



NOTHING YET. BUT
HIS OLD MAN MADE A NAME
FOR HIMSELF IN THE FIRST
WAR AND HE'S GOT A
BROTHER WITH A D.S.O.

THAT'S NOT BAD!





AS SOON AS THEY SAW THEIR NEW
OFFICER THEY LIKED THE LOOK OF
HIM. A WEEK AFTER HIS ARRIVAL
SEVEN PLATOON WERE DETAILED
FOR THEIR FIRST PATROL...



BUT THINGS DID NOT WORK OUT THE WAY CORPORAL MILLER AND HIS FRIENDS EXPECTED...

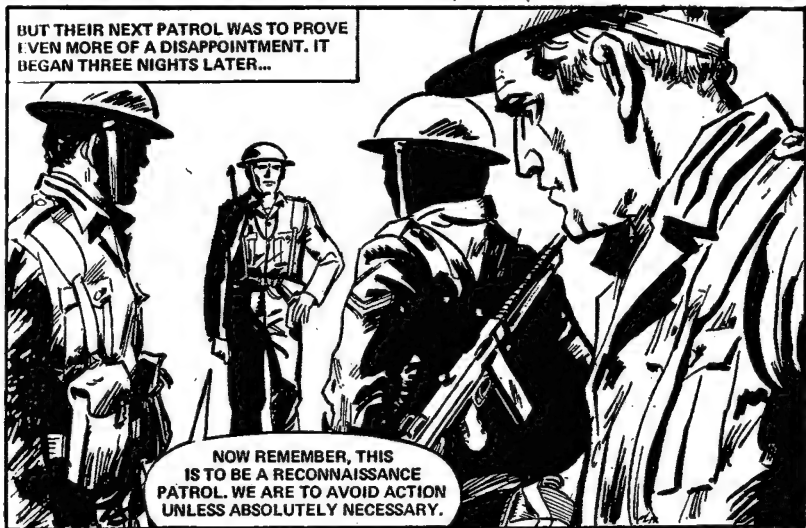


SOON THEY REACHED THE LIMIT OF THEIR PATROL AND TURNED BACK TOWARDS THEIR OWN LINES...





BUT THEIR NEXT PATROL WAS TO PROVE EVEN MORE OF A DISAPPOINTMENT. IT BEGAN THREE NIGHTS LATER...



IT WAS CORPORAL MILLER WHO SIGHTED
THE ENEMY PATROL AN HOUR LATER...

JERRIES AND THEY
HAVEN'T SEEN US, SIR!

GET BACK,
CORPORAL!
KEEP DOWN!

BUT, SIR...
WE CAN TAKE
'EM!

YOU HEARD THE
LIEUTENANT.
SHUT UP AND GET
DOWN.

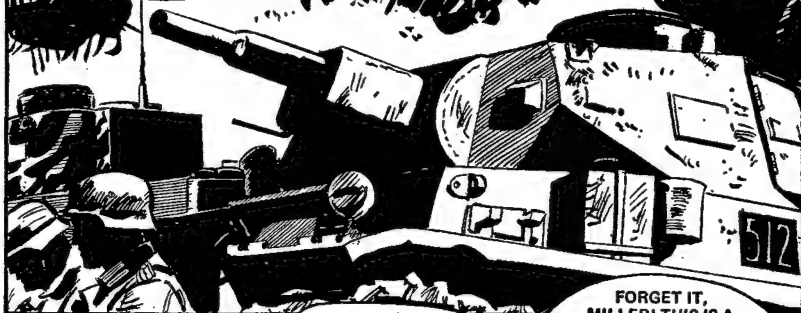
THE GERMANS MOVED ON AND THE LIEUTENANT WAVED SEVEN PLATOON FORWARD...

LIEUTENANT BARNDALE SILENTLY LED THE MEN THROUGH THE TREES OVERLOOKING A WINDING ROAD. THEN...

RIGHT!
LET'S GO!

LOOK AT THAT
LOT, SERGEANT!

MARK FOUR!
I DIDN'T KNOW
THE JERRIES HAD
ARMOUR UP HERE!



HOW ABOUT A FEW
GRENADES, SARGE?

FORGET IT,
MILLER! THIS IS A
RECCE PATROL. OUR JOB
IS TO OBSERVE AND REPORT
— AND THAT'S WHAT WE'RE
GOING TO DO!
COME ON.



MILLER LINGERED BEHIND, GAZING GREEDILY DOWN AT THE PANZERS...

COME ON, MILLER!
GET WEAVING! THIS
ISN'T A TEA PARTY!



MILLER TURNED AND RE-JOINED THE REST OF THE PLATOON...

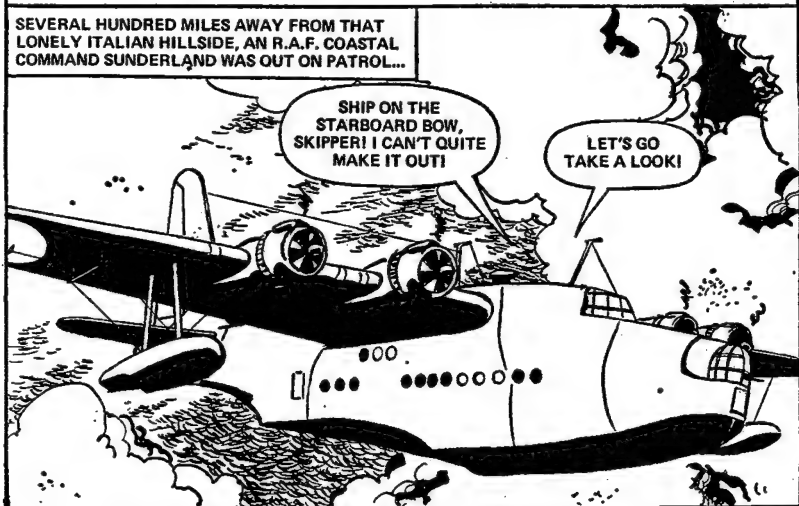
WHAT'S WRONG WITH
THIS NEW BLOKE, SARGE?
SCOTTIE WOULD HAVE BLOWN
THOSE TANKS SKY-HIGH!

NOT ON THIS PATROL,
HE WOULDN'T. SCOTTIE
OBEYED ORDERS. I SUGGEST
YOU DO THE SAME. NOW,
COME ON!



Chapter 3. *EXCHANGE OF FIRE*

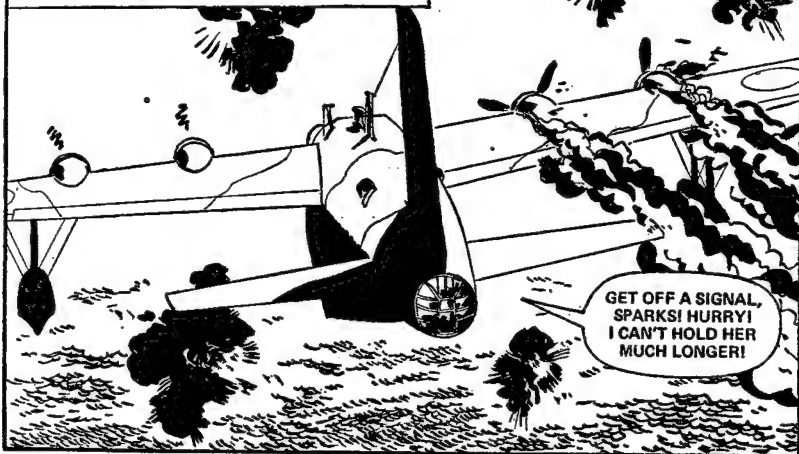
SEVERAL HUNDRED MILES AWAY FROM THAT LONELY ITALIAN HILLSIDE, AN R.A.F. COASTAL COMMAND SUNDERLAND WAS OUT ON PATROL....



IN THE GLOOM OF A DRIVING RAIN SQUALL IDENTIFICATION WAS DIFFICULT, BUT AS THE SUNDERLAND DIVED LOWER ...



CAUGHT IN A WITHERING CURTAIN OF FLAK THE FLYING BOAT FALTERED, FLAMES LEAPING FROM TWO OF ITS ENGINES...



THE RADIO MESSAGE WAS DULY RECEIVED AND THE DESTROYER H.M.S. ANTARES, AT THAT TIME ON PATROL, WAS CONTACTED...

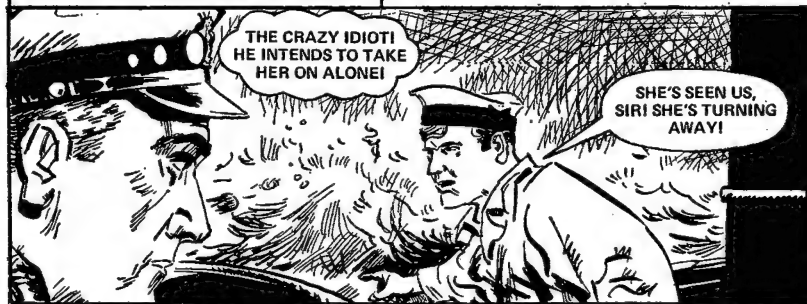


FOR LIEUTENANT COMMANDER KEITH BARNDALE, D.S.O., SKIPPER OF THE ANTARES, THIS WAS A CHANCE IN A MILLION...

FULL AHEAD BOTH!
STEER ONE-TWO-FIVE!

DUSK WAS ALREADY CLOSING IN WHEN A LOOKOUT FINALLY SIGHTED THEIR QUARRY...

IT'S THE VON
GERHARDT, ALL
RIGHT, SIR!



BARNDALE WATCHED THE ENEMY
SHIP CLOSELY THROUGH HIS GLASSES...

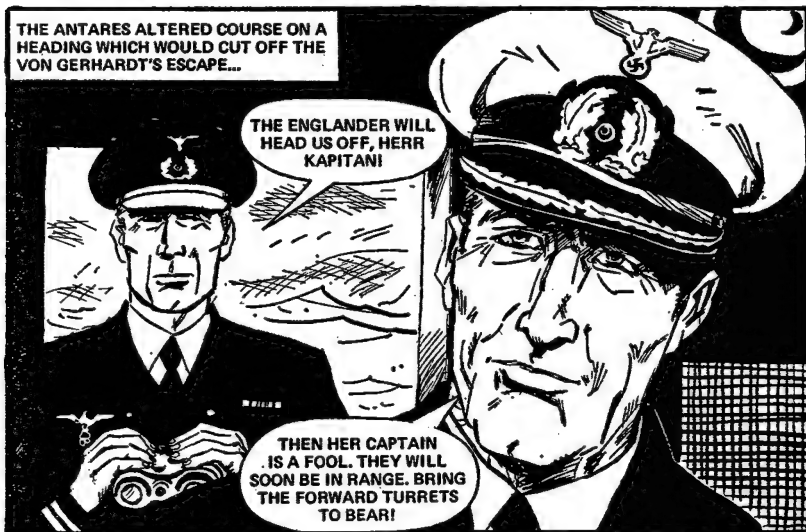
SHE'S HEADING FOR
THE FOG BANK, NUMBER
ONE! WE'LL SOON PUT A
STOP TO THAT LITTLE GAME.
STARBOARD TEN!



THE ANTARES ALTERED COURSE ON A
HEADING WHICH WOULD CUT OFF THE
VON GERHARDT'S ESCAPE...


THE ENGLANDER WILL
HEAD US OFF, HERR
KAPITANI!

THEN HER CAPTAIN
IS A FOOL. THEY WILL
SOON BE IN RANGE. BRING
THE FORWARD TURRETS
TO BEAR!




THE FIRST SALVO FELL SHORT AS THE
BRITISH DESTROYER VANISHED IN
THE FOG...

PORT TWENTY! THEY'VE
LOST US, NUMBER ONE!
NOW'S OUR CHANCE!



IT WAS DARK AND RAINING WHEN
THE ANTARES CAME OUT OF THE FOG...

WHERE IS SHE,
SIR?




ON THE PORT BEAM!
I CAN SEE HER
BOW WAVE!

THE FAINT GLEAM OF WATER FROTHING
PAST THE VON GERHARDT'S BOW WAS ALL
THAT COULD BE SEEN, BUT IT WAS ENOUGH...

HARD-A-PORT, HELMSMAN!
STAND BY TORPEDO TUBES!



YOU'RE NOT PLANNING
TO ATTACK HER, SIR? SHE
COULD BLOW US OUT OF THE
WATER BEFORE WE'RE EVEN IN
RANGE. IT WOULD BE SUICIDE!



MAYBE ... MAYBE NOT,
NUMBER ONE. WE'LL BE HARD
TO SEE IN THIS LOT.

CALMLY, KEITH HELD HIS COURSE, KNOWING
THAT HE WOULD HAVE ONLY ONE CHANCE...

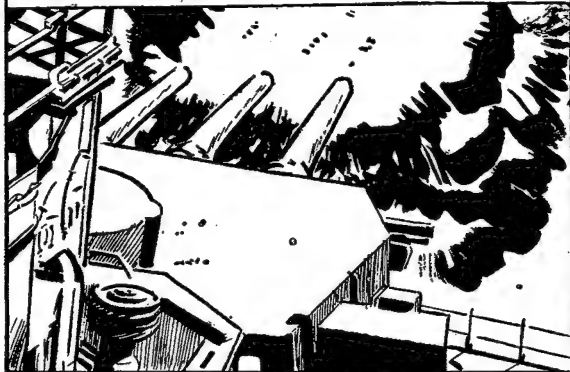
HOW MUCH LONGER
CAN OUR LUCK HOLD?

RANGE SIX
THOUSAND!

SECONDS LATER AN ALERT LOOKOUT ABOARD
THE VON GERHARDT SPOTTED THE SLEEK SHAPE...

ENEMY DESTROYER ON
THE STARBOARD QUARTER!

KEITH BARNDALE'S DAREDEVIL MANOEUVRE HAD ALMOST COME OFF, BUT AS THE ANTARES TURNED TO DELIVER HER ATTACK THE VON GERHARDT'S GUNS SWUNG INTO LINE AND OPENED FIRE...



THE DESTROYER'S TORPEDOES LEAPT FROM THEIR TUBES AS THE FIRST GERMAN SHELLS ROARED OVER...



FIRE ONE!
FIRE TWO!
FIRE THREE...!

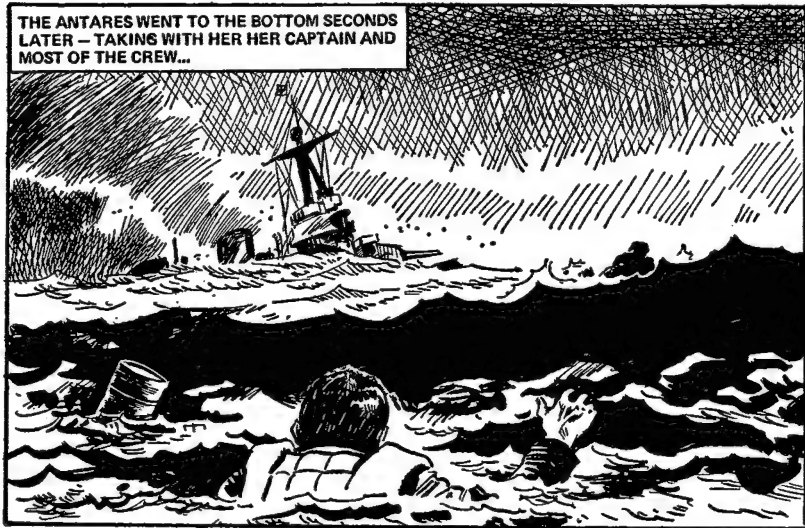
EVEN AS THE ANTARES TURNED AWAY A SECOND BROADSIDE STRADDLED HER WITH KILLING EFFECT...



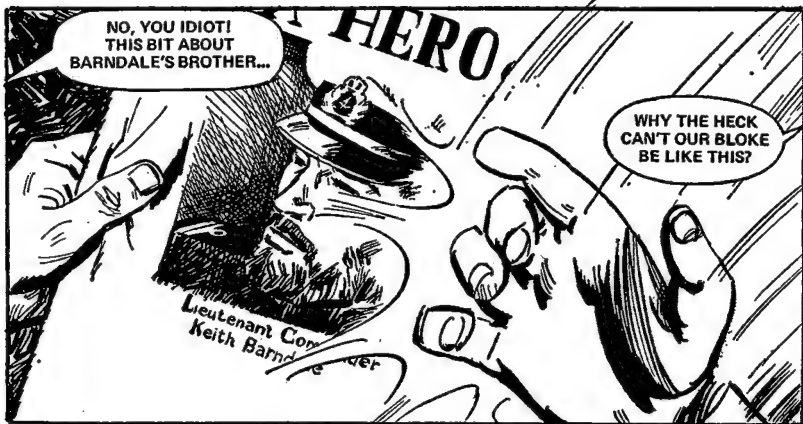
AAAGH!



THE ANTARES WENT TO THE BOTTOM SECONDS LATER — TAKING WITH HER HER CAPTAIN AND MOST OF THE CREW...



Chapter 4.

KILLING GROUND

THE NEWSPAPER WAS EAGERLY
PASSED AROUND THE PLATOON...

YOUNG BARNDALE'S
A GOOD OFFICER, MILLER.
WE CAN'T ALL BE HEROES!

TOO RIGHT,
SARGE! HIS
BROTHER MIGHT
BE A HERO, BUT
WHERE'D IT GET
HIM? HE'S DEAD
AND SO ARE MOST
OF HIS MEN.

AS THE DISCUSSION WENT ON AMONG HIS MEN,
STEVE BARNDALE WAS RECEIVING FRESH ORDERS...

THE GERMANS HAVE
BROKEN THROUGH IN
STRENGTH ON OUR LEFT
FLANK, WHICH LEAVES
US OUT ON A LIMB. WE'LL
HAVE TO PULL BACK ACROSS
THE RIVER BEFORE WE'RE
SURROUNDED, STEVE.

I'LL GET ON
TO IT RIGHT AWAY,
SIR.

CORPORAL MILLER HEARD
THE ORDER IN DISGUST...

ON YOUR FEET,
MILLER! WE'RE
PULLING BACK!

WHAT FOR,
SARGE? WE FOUGHT
HARD FOR THIS
HILL...

SERGEANT CARTER HAD NO TIME TO ARGUE.
THE OTHER PLATOONS WERE ALREADY
PULLING OUT...

DON'T ARGUE,
CORPORAL! GET
GOING - THAT'S
AN ORDER!



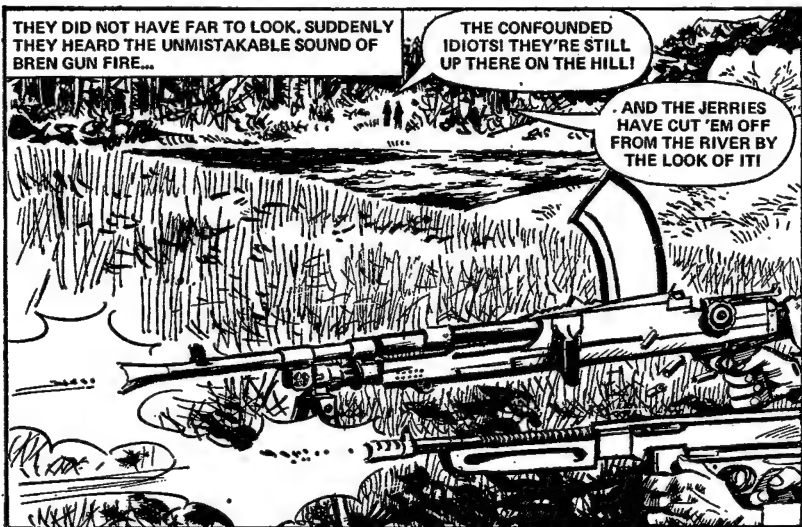
THE ENTIRE COMPANY WITHDREW IN GOOD ORDER, BUT AS STEVE CHECKED ON SEVEN PLATOON HALF-AN-HOUR LATER...



THEY DID NOT HAVE FAR TO LOOK. SUDDENLY THEY HEARD THE UNMISTAKABLE SOUND OF BREN GUN FIRE...

THE CONFOUNDED IDIOTS! THEY'RE STILL UP THERE ON THE HILL!

AND THE JERRIES HAVE CUT 'EM OFF FROM THE RIVER BY THE LOOK OF IT!



STEVE STUDIED THE FAR BANK FOR A FEW MINUTES, THEN...

THE GERMANS
HAVEN'T MOVED INTO
THAT GULLY ON THE RIGHT,
SERGEANT. THOSE THREE
IDIOTS COULD GET AWAY
DOWN THAT.

YES, SIR. IF THEY
KNEW ABOUT IT.



AND WITHOUT A
RADIO THERE'S NO
WAY WE CAN TELL THEM.
THERE'S NOTHING ELSE
FOR IT - I'LL TAKE TWO
MEN WITH ME AND TRY
AND GET THEM OUT.

IT'LL BE RISKY,
SIR. YOU'LL BE PUTTING
YOUR HEAD ON THE BLOCK
FOR THOSE THREE IDIOTS.

STEVE GAVE A GRIM LAUGH...



STEVE ASKED FOR, AND GOT TWO VOLUNTEERS TO GO WITH HIM AND PREPARED TO RE-CROSS THE RIVER...



THE SERGEANT WAITED UNTIL THE
THREE MEN ENTERED THE WATER...

OKAY, YOU LOT!
LET'S SEE SOME ACTION!
GET THAT BREN WORKING,
THOMPSON! KEEP JERRY'S
HEAD DOWN!

SURE THING,
SARGE!



SMOKE WAS BILLLOWING FROM THE FAR
BANK AS STEVE AND HIS MEN INCHED
CAUTIOUSLY ACROSS THE RIVER...

WATCH YOUR
FOOTING, LADS.

THANKS TO THE SERGEANT'S DIVERSION,
THEY REACHED THE FAR BANK WITHOUT
BEING SEEN...



THE GERMAN GUNNERS WERE TOO BUSY WATCHING
THE BILLOWING SMOKE TO NOTICE THE THREE MEN
RUNNING FOR THE GULLY BELOW THEM...



CORPORAL MILLER WAS EQUALLY PUZZLED...



MEANWHILE, IN THE SHALLOW GULLY, STEVE BARNDALE HAD CRAWLED WITHIN RANGE OF THE ENEMY SPANDAU...



SUDDENLY, HE LEAPED TO HIS FEET AND TRIGGERED THE TOMMY GUN...

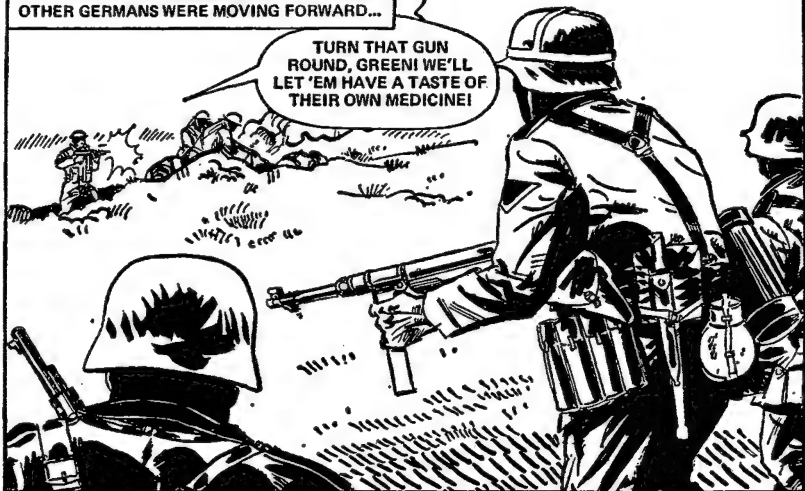


THE SPANDAU CREW HAD NO CHANCE TO FIGHT...



ALERTED BY THE SUDDEN BURST OF FIRING
OTHER GERMANS WERE MOVING FORWARD...

TURN THAT GUN
ROUND, GREENI WE'LL
LET 'EM HAVE A TASTE OF
THEIR OWN MEDICINE!



CROUCHING BEHIND THE SPANDAU, STEVE
TRIGGERED A LONG, SAVAGE BURST...

GET MILLER AND
THE OTHER TWO WHILE
I COVER YOU

RIGHT, SIR!



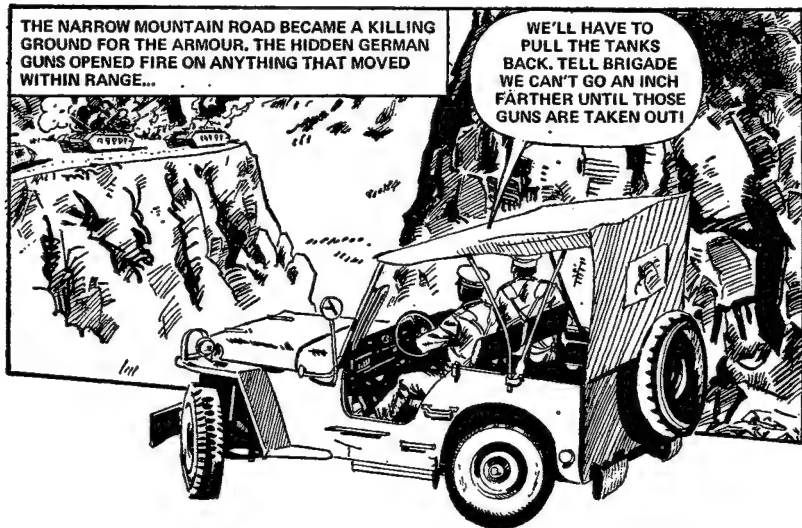
THE GERMANS WERE STOPPED BY THAT VICIOUS BLAST AND STEVE TOSSED A GRENADE UNDER THE GUN AND RAN AFTER THE OTHERS...




PLUNGING INTO THE SMOKE STILL LYING OVER THE RIVER BANK, THEY WERE SOON ACROSS THE RIVER...









AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE SHOWED THAT THERE WERE EIGHT GUNS RANGED ALONG THE CASTELITO PASS. EIGHT GUNS THAT HAD HALTED THE ADVANCE OF AN ENTIRE ARMY...

WE'VE CHECKED EVERY INCH OF GROUND, COLONEL. THE ONLY WAY FORWARD IS THROUGH THE PASS. BUT OUR OWN ARTILLERY CAN'T BE BROUGHT TO BEAR ON THOSE EIGHTY-EIGHTS.

WHAT ABOUT THE R.A.F.?

THEY'VE TRIED ALREADY. BUT THE GUNS ARE SITED IN CAVES BLASTED OUT OF THE ROCK FACE. BOMBS CAN'T REACH THEM.



THEN IT'LL HAVE TO BE INFANTRY.



THE SERGEANT SHRUGGED. HE KNEW AS LITTLE AS ANYONE. THEN STEVE WALKED UP....

THAT'S ENOUGH, SERGEANT! THEY'RE AS GOOD AS THEY'LL EVER BE.

VERY GOOD, SIR!



WE'RE GOING AFTER THE EIGHTY-EIGHTS IN CASTELITO PASS, SERGEANT. EVEN CORPORAL MILLER SHOULD FIND THAT SUFFICIENTLY EXCITING, DON'T YOU THINK?

THANKFULLY, THE MEN OF SEVEN PLATOON STOOD DOWN.

TELL THE MEN TO GET SOME REST OVER THE NEXT FEW HOURS, SERGEANT.



CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT, SIR?



Chapter 5.***SPIKE THE GUNS***

AT EXACTLY 0100 HOURS THAT NIGHT,
THE MEN OF SEVEN PLATOON CROSSED
THROUGH THE GERMAN LINES...



I RECKON OUR
LIEUTENANT'S
LEARNING, GINGER!
GETTING US A REAL
JOB FOR A CHANGE.

MAYBE HE'S
NOT SUCH A BAD
BLOKE, AFTER
ALL!



SHUT UP, YOU
TWO! D'YOU WANT
THE JERRIES TO KNOW
WE'RE HERE?

THE PLAN WAS FOR THE PLATOON TO WORK ITS WAY ALONG THE RIDGE ABOVE THE GUNS, THEN TO USE ROPES TO DROP DOWN ON THEM FROM ABOVE.

THIS RAIN'S GOING TO MAKE THE ROPEWORK TRICKY, SIR.

IT CUTS BOTH WAYS, SERGEANT. IT WILL ALSO MAKE IT HARDER FOR JERRY TO HEAR US.

FOR THE NEXT TWO HOURS THEY CAUTIOUSLY INCHED THEIR WAY UP THE BACKBONE OF THE RIDGE...

THERE'S THE PERIMETER WIRE!

RIGHT, MILLER, AND TOPHAM, YOU TAKE THE SENTRIES ON THE RIGHT! GREEN AND DAWSON, COME WITH ME!

ONE BY ONE THE PATROLLING
GERMAN SENTRIES WERE SILENCED...



TWENTY YARDS BEYOND THE PERIMETER WIRE
THEY FOUND THE CLIFF EDGE OVERLOOKING
THE ENEMY GUNS...

ALL CLEAR,
SIR!

GOOD WORK! NOW
GET THOSE ROPES
FIXED!



SO FAR ALL HAD GONE ACCORDING TO PLAN. BUT IT WAS TOO GOOD TO LAST. SUDDENLY THEY HEARD VOICES AND DROPPED INTO COVER...



SEVEN PLATOON'S LUCK RAN OUT SECONDS LATER WHEN ONE OF THE ENEMY SOLDIERS CAUGHT HIS FOOT IN ONE OF THE ROPES...



AS STEVE AND CORPORAL MILLER OPENED
FIRE THE ENEMY TRIED DESPERATELY TO
REACH COVER — BUT THERE WAS NO ESCAPE...




ALL HOPE OF SURPRISE HAD GONE. STEVE KNEW THAT OTHER GERMANS WOULD SOON COME TO INVESTIGATE THE BURST OF GUNFIRE...



GET GOING...
SERGEANT!
WE'LL COVER YOU
FROM HERE.

AS SERGEANT CARTER AND HIS PARTY WENT OVER THE EDGE, STEVE SPREAD HIS MEN OUT ALONG THE CLIFF TOP...



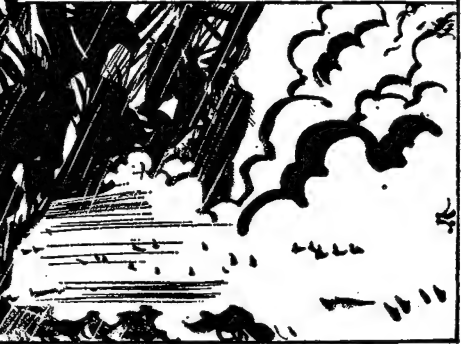
FIND YOURSELVES
GOOD COVER, LADS. WE'VE
GOT TO HOLD THEM!



FIFTY FEET BELOW THE CLIFF TOP, CORPORAL MILLER FOUND HIMSELF SWINGING OVER THE BARREL OF AN ENEMY EIGHTY-EIGHT. HIS REACTION WAS SWIFT AND DEADLY...



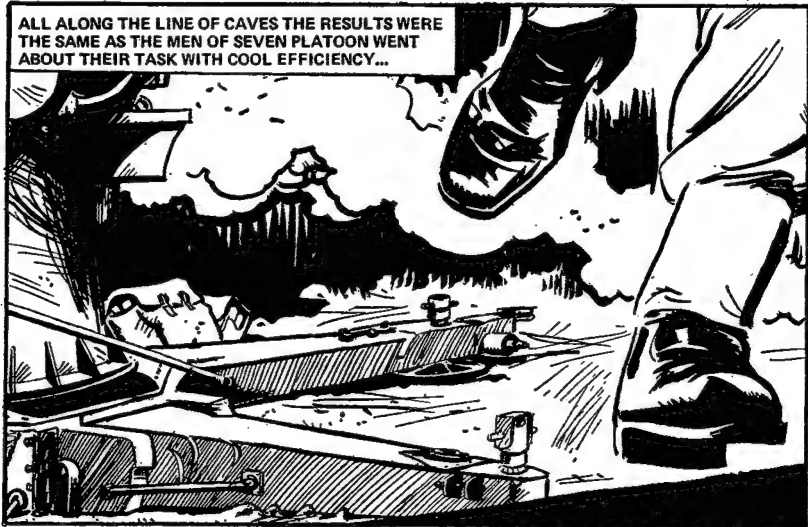
THE GRENADES EXPLODED WITH FEARFUL RESULTS IN THE CONFINED SPACE OF THE CAVE...



AS THE SMOKE CLEARED, MILLER SWUNG HIMSELF INTO THE CAVE AND BEGAN PLACING HIS SATCHEL CHARGES...



ALL ALONG THE LINE OF CAVES THE RESULTS WERE THE SAME AS THE MEN OF SEVEN PLATOON WENT ABOUT THEIR TASK WITH COOL EFFICIENCY...



ONE BY ONE THE DEMOLITION PARTY CONTINUED THEIR DESCENT TO THE BOTTOM OF THE RIDGE BELOW THE CAVES...



ON THE CLIFF-TOP, STEVE CHECKED HIS WATCH. IT WAS TIME TO MOVE...



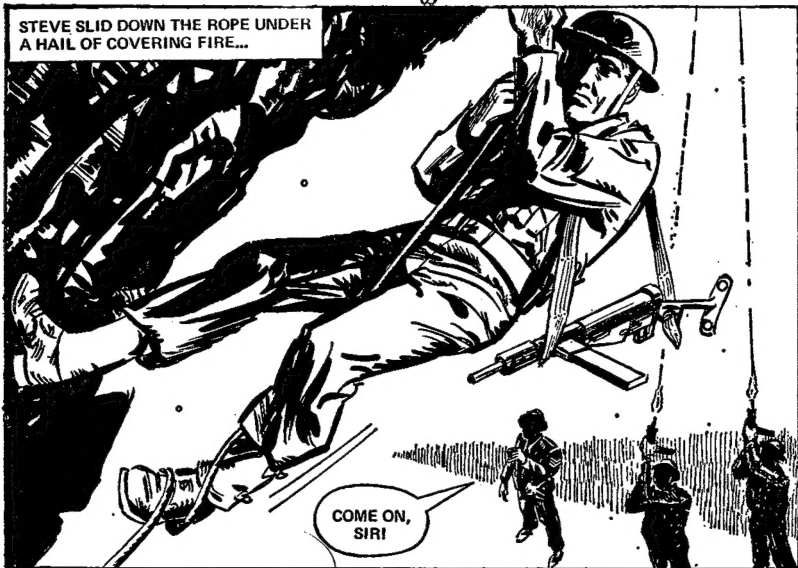
THE GERMANS WERE SURGING FORWARD
ONCE MORE AS THE MEN FELL BACK...



STEVE WAS THE LAST TO LEAVE: HE WAS
STILL FIRING AS HE LOWERED HIMSELF
OVER THE EDGE...



STEVE SLID DOWN THE ROPE UNDER
A HAIL OF COVERING FIRE...




COME ON,
SIR!

HE WAS ONLY FEET FROM THE GROUND WHEN
THE CHARGES BLEW, THE BLAST BOWLING HIM
OVER...



UGH!



MILLER RAN FORWARD AND HELPED HIM TO HIS FEET. ABOVE THEM THE ECHOES OF THE EXPLOSIONS WERE DYING AWAY...

THAT'S PUT PAID TO THEIR LITTLE GAME, I RECKON. NOW WE CAN ALL PUSH ON AND HAVE ANOTHER CRACK AT JERRY!

MILLER, YOU'RE IMPOSSIBLE! YOU'RE ONLY HAPPY WHEN THE LEAD'S FLYING AROUND YOUR EARS. STILL, YOU'RE RIGHT. I RECKON WE KEPT SEVEN PLATOON'S REPUTATION INTACT WITH THIS NIGHT'S WORK!

ALSO ON SALE NOW...

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